Judaic Studies

Jews have lived and flourished over thousands of years in a variety of social contexts, stretching from the Land of Israel and the eastern Mediterranean to Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. Concentrators will have the opportunity to study Jews in these contexts, getting to know their social structures, and what they have created. The subjects of study cover an astonishing range, including history and society, Jewish law and philosophy, and Jewish literature and ritual. Students will learn to unlock this wealth in both the ancient and the modern worlds through a number of academic disciplines - History, Religious Studies, and Literature. These also provide tools for studying and analyzing human societies and cultures in general, for which Jewish experiences provide an important perspective.

PROGRAM IN JUDAIC STUDIES

Required Coursework

The Program in Judaic Studies offers two paths (detailed below). Please note that the following apply to each concentrator:

1) All students are required to take a total of ten courses.

2) All students must take one full year of Hebrew (two of the ten required courses). Generally, this requirement will consist of two courses in Elementary Hebrew (JUDS 0100/JUDS 0200) or the equivalent as determined by a proficiency examination. Fulfillment of the Hebrew requirement through examination does not reduce the requirement to take ten courses for the concentration.

3) Upon declaring a concentration in Judaic Studies, each student must define his or her primary disciplinary track (History, Religious Studies, or Language/Literature). Concentrators will then be assigned a faculty mentor in that discipline (within the Judaic Studies faculty) to help students select courses and construct a coherent concentration plan.

Program in History or Religious Studies:

For this track, students are expected to complete a minimum of four courses in their area of disciplinary focus (History or Religious Studies), at least one of which must and no more than two of which may be outside the Program in Judaic Studies in the department of disciplinary focus (preferably methods courses, such as in the History department or RELS 1000). Students in this track, in consultation with the concentration adviser and faculty mentor, may apply up to two additional Hebrew language courses (JUDS 0300, JUDS 0400, or JUDS 0500) to the additional four required courses for the concentration.

Program in Language/Literature:

For this track, students are expected to complete five courses in Hebrew language (JUDS 0100/JUDS 0200; JUDS 0300/JUDS 0400; JUDS 0500). In addition, students will take Israeli Literature in Hebrew (JUDS 1810) and one further course in Judaic Studies in (within the disciplinary focus). Two additional courses in the disciplinary focus, at least one of which must be outside the Program in Judaic Studies in a department of shared disciplinary focus (e.g. English or Comparative Literature), are also required. Fulfillment of the Hebrew requirement through proficiency examination does not reduce the requirement to take ten courses for the concentration.

4) Of the courses required in the Program in Judaic Studies, at least one should focus on the ancient period and one should focus on the modern period.

5) Each student, in discussion with his/her mentor, is required to designate an advanced course (1000 level) in his/her senior year either within the Judaic Studies program or in the corresponding disciplinary department as the capstone for his/her concentration. Within the frame of this capstone course, the concentrator will write a final paper on a topic in Judaic Studies that displays in an appropriate way the theoretical and interpretive issues of the concentration focus. If a student opts to fulfill this requirement in a course outside the Program in Judaic Studies, the student must get permission in advance both from his/her mentor and from the professor of the course in question since the student’s final project will address a Judaic Studies topic or theme.

6) Students who study at other institutions, either in the United States or abroad, may apply a maximum of four courses (two topical and two language courses) to the concentration.

7) Double concentrators may count up to two courses that they have used to complete their concentration requirements in another department towards their concentration in Judaic Studies.

Honors Program

Any student who wishes to engage more deeply in research related to Judaic Studies in any of its disciplines or branches is invited to consider writing an Honors Thesis.

The Honors Thesis

The goal of the thesis is to add to the existing scholarship in the field of Judaic Studies. It should be based on original research, involving the close reading of primary sources. The honors thesis is expected to present an argument based on the student's own analysis and will engage an ongoing debate or discussion in the field, demonstrating an awareness of the major research done until now and clearly identifying its own contribution, however limited. Since it is the equivalent of two semester-long courses, it should be a substantial piece of work (typically between 35,000-55,000 words) containing a sustained and consistently supported argument. To be successful, the student needs to adopt both a critical research methodology and a logical research strategy, both of which should be discussed in the thesis itself. In addition to being assessed in all these aspects, the thesis will also be graded on its organization (the way in which it is structured into separate and clearly defined chapters to support the main argument) as well as the quality and precision of its writing.

Work that simply describes and summarizes its sources along with previous research is not acceptable. The goal here is original research and analysis.

Entering the Program

In order to be considered a candidate for Honors, students will be expected to have maintained an outstanding record (at least A in Judaic Studies courses. The Honors thesis, which fulfills the capstone requirement, will normally be written as a two-semester individual study project (numbered JUDS 1975/JUDS 1976) during the senior year. A student contemplating a thesis should approach the faculty member with whom he or she hopes to work during the sixth semester. Once he or she has agreed to be the advisor (or helped find another member of the program better suited to the project), the student begins a process of consultation in order to determine a topic for the thesis, its sources, and proposed methodology. The contours of the project should also be laid out so that the student can commence productive research at the very beginning of the seventh semester. After this, a second reader for the thesis should be chosen by the advisor in consultation with the student. This may be a faculty member of the Judaic Studies program, one of the affiliate faculty, or, should the topic require it, a member of a different department. By the last week of the semester, the student should submit a thesis information form detailing the thesis topic with a short description of the proposed project, countersigned by advisor and second reader.

Thesis Proposal

During the first three weeks of the seventh semester, the student should work with the faculty advisor to write a thesis proposal. This should be a brief document (1,500-2,000 words) explaining the topic chosen for the thesis and its significance to the field of Judaic Studies, with reference to previous research on the subject. The proposal should detail the questions to be asked and the kind of argument that will be made as well as explaining the primary sources and research methodology that will be employed. The proposed research strategy (i.e. the stages by which research and writing will be done) and timetable should be appended together with a brief, one page bibliography of primary sources and major research to be consulted.

Once the advisor is satisfied with the proposal, the student will be considered fully accepted into the Honors program and can enroll in the required independent study course by the last day to add a course in the fourth week of the term.
Research and Writing

It is the responsibility of the student to carry out the research program outlined in the proposal, as well as to write the thesis in an organized and timely fashion. During the process of research and writing, the advisor will continue to work closely with the student, providing guidance on research methods and suggesting further secondary reading. A regular meeting schedule will be set up to help the student meet the short- and long-term deadlines he or she has set. The advisor will also evaluate the progress of the research, providing any necessary direction and detailed feedback on written drafts.

The second reader will also be available to provide a measure of input and guidance during the process of research and writing. This may be particularly important in those areas where the primary advisor has limited expertise. The second reader may also be willing to help with giving feedback on various sections of the thesis drafts. All these roles should be determined by a process of consultation involving the advisor, the student, and the second reader him/herself.

The final thesis should have a complete scientific apparatus - citations and a full bibliography - in a form determined by the advisor.

It should be submitted no later than April 15 for May graduates and November 15 for December completers.

Assessment

The thesis will be assessed independently by the advisor and the second reader in written reports. In order to receive Honors, it should be deemed excellent according to the following standards:

• Is the scope of the work appropriate for an Honors thesis?
• To what extent does it qualify as original research?
• To what degree does it sustain an analytic argument throughout?
• To what degree is it rooted in an engagement with previous research?
• How well does it reflect critically on its method and process?
• To what extent is the organization adequate to the argument presented?
• How well is the thesis rooted in the common conventions of the field?
• To what degree is the writing clear, cogent, and free of errors of grammar, tone, and style?

The two reports will be circulated to all faculty members in the program, who will review them before making the final determination at the next faculty meeting whether the thesis merits Honors. The meeting must be held, the decision reached, and the candidate informed before the Registrar's deadline for that semester.

Further Information

Students who are interested in further information about the concentration should contact the Judaic Studies Office at 163 George Street to make an appointment with the undergraduate concentration advisor. [Tel: 401.863.3912] or Judaic@brown.edu.